

Of Gods and Heroes

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They told me fear is a virtue, as I packed my gear and broke camp this morning. Each one, eerie and powerful, looming above the settlement as if gods. Strangely, I did not find it the least bit unnerving to be conversing with titans. This race...they call themselves the Sons of the Jjaro. Whatever that means. Perhaps if it weren't for this damned war, I would be more intrigued. Alas, combat does something to a man's mind. A type of clarity, akin to omniscience. I do not wonder, because I simply comprehend.

Last night around the plasmene torches, burning so brightly our commander constantly worried that they might attract the Covenant from ten thousand miles away, Milboq told me the legend of the Tenth Mjolnir Mark IV Cyborg. And about a world named Tau Ceti...vaguely I recall this from stories my father used to tell me. That was before the Velierre crashed. Before he died.

All that remains of Tau Ceti today, my little hand library tells me, is a shattered and fragmented spheroid, seared to the bedrock and frozen in nuclear winter. And, if one examines the space lanes closely enough, the trail of ionized particles a massive vessel leaves in its wake. Even now, six hundred years after the Marathon vanished, its traces still remain. The legend says the Tenth Mjolnir Cyborg saved this ship. If so, where is she now?

Cortana spoke to me earlier, before I left. That damned computer never seems willing to halt its ambiguous poetry (if she can even be called such a thing) and carry on like a normal sapient being. Rather, she rambles about ancient myths and irrelevant societies. I would rather she supplied me with fresh weapons, than recollect on a time it opened doors aboard a vessel whose name she refuses to

utter.

She told me of an ancient race called the S'pht. And of their persecution by an old nemesis, which every school child knows well, both from stories and from nightmares. The Pfhor.

It seems Cortana once knew the Tenth Mjolnir. He served under her power. As apparent as it is to me, she seems reluctant to call him what he truly was to her...a friend. Perhaps the only friend she ever had. Milboq says Cortana is not old enough to know the cyborg. Her name did not enter the data nets until far after the debacle at Tau Ceti. Hundreds of years. Milboq says the Tenth Mjolnir did have an AI accomplice...but its name was Durandal, and it has not been seen since it appeared out beyond Pluto, throwing the Outer Guard into confusion as it danced madly about, and flashed from existence without warning or trace.

I have a sneaking suspicion Cortana and Durandal are one and the same.

There is no more time to ponder. The warrior in me is reborn, and the Covenant are approaching with speed. The Sons of the Jjaro say they must depart, lest they reveal their presence here to the Covenant. As they depart, shaking the earth with thunderous footsteps and finally leap, unbounded, into the Heavens, I find myself wondering who the Jjaro were, if these gods could be their sons. Could they have made this place? This halo, a symbol of divinity around the star below? If it is so, perhaps we are not fighting over this ringworld after all...rather, we fight for control of the divine star which burns hotly above at all times, except for when it is eclipsed by that gas giant.

I must desist. Now the roar of Covenant tanks grows undeniably raucous. They shall not take our ship. They shall not take our position.

They shall not take our god, hovering silently and omnipresent above.

End
file.